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# For Moynihan, a Search For the Middle Ground

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WASHINGTON, April 11 — Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said today that he had tried to position himself in the political center on the question of aid to Nicaraguan rebels.

But the New York Democrat, who recently wrote a book on the need for international law in the conduct of foreign policy, appears, after reports of American involvement in the mining of Nicaraguan waters, to be finding the middle increasingly uncomfortable.

"I've not been an enthusiast for covert aid," Mr. Moynihan said in an interview in his Senate office. "I have not been the point man. My concern has to be that if it's going to be done — and a majority has always existed — that it be a defined, legal and limited program. I've worked very hard and feel betrayed."

Mr. Moynihan said he was aware only after voting for the \$21 million aid program last Thursday of the scope of American involvement in the mining.

## "It Didn't Sink In, Obviously"

On Tuesday Mr. Moynihan said it was "possible that there was a reference to this in one of our briefings." The Senator said his senior aide on the Intelligence Committee, Gary Schmitt, "seems to remember it." Mr. Moynihan said, "It didn't sink in, obviously."

In the interview today, the Senator said that during a briefing with the committee Tuesday, William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, pointed to two pieces of testimony last month when he referred to the mining.

The Senator added that the word "mining" had been used in the committee in connection with the contras, the United States-backed Nicaraguan rebels. "The contras had been doing a certain amount of sporadic harassment of harbors, which we knew about," he said. "But nothing of the order of American vessels offshore."

Early last week, at Mr. Schmitt's request, staff members on the committee who monitor the operation were briefed by a senior official of the Central Intelligence Agency on the scope of the mining in Nicaraguan waters.

Mr. Schmitt said he had asked for the fuller briefing after a Soviet tanker struck a mine.

## C.I.A. Aide Answered Questions

The C.I.A. official answered all questions put to him by the committee staff, Mr. Schmitt said, and afterward a memorandum was written on the briefing for circulation to members of the committee.

Mr. Schmitt said the briefing by the senior official had made him fully aware of the extent of American involvement. But, because of the "crunch of time" during the debate, Mr. Moynihan's priority last week to get the Administration to define the goals of the aid program and the "massive effort to keep the public record straight," the memorandum was haphazardly circulated, he said.

Mr. Moynihan did not see the memorandum but "got a quick brief before the vote" from Mr. Schmitt, the aide said.

Last week, just before voting for the \$21 million aid program on the Senate floor, Mr. Moynihan, when asked how the mining of the Nicaraguan ports squared with an adherence to international law, said: "I don't know that it does square. I don't know that it doesn't. I do not think that this is an easy thing." He said he had asked for a legal opinion on the question from Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth W. Dam.

Asked if he still supported the aid program that he helped define and voted for last week, Mr. Moynihan said today, "I'm sitting here wondering what is really going on."